India

FOR THE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

THE fifteenth Session of the Indian National Congress was opened at Lucknow on Wednesday last. A Reuter's telegram received yesterday (Thursday) says that "nearly a thousand delegates were present, including over four hundred Mahometans. There were five thousand visitors. The chairman of the Reception Committee said that he had met with great cordiality from the Hindu and Mahometan population of Lucknow. Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt was elected President of the Congress by acclamation." Reuter's telegram proceeds to summarise Mr. Dutt's presidential address, of which we print a full report in our present issue. To judge from the proceedings of the opening day, the fifteenth Congress seems likely to be in every way a worthy successor of the Congresses that have gone before it. That nearly 1,000 delegates should have attended in spite of plague and famine is extremely satisfactory, and the fact that more than 400 of them were Mahometans is a sufficient answer to the amateurs of disunion in India. We deal at some length elsewhere with Mr. Dutt's admirable address.

The Sirdars Natu have at length been released by the Bombay Government, acting, we must suppose, with the approval of the Secretary of State for India. The brief telegram (hidden away by the *Times* in small type) in which the announcement is made contrasts significantly with the journalistic noise and fury that accompanied the arrest of the unfortunate men. Their detention seems to have ceased on Christmas Day. They were then "informed that they are no longer State prisoners, and that the attachment on their lands and estates has been cancelled." Lord Sandhurst may congratulate himself that this grievous injustice has been brought to an end before his departure from Bombay. We are curious to know at what precise date, and for what precise reason, the Government of Bombay, or its dictator Lord George Hamilton, arrived at the conclusion that the interests of public tranquillity no longer required the detention of the suspects against whom so many conflicting slanders but no formal accusations have been officially uttered. It will also be interesting to see what proceedings, if any, follow this belated and graceless release. The arrest of the Natus and the attachment of their goods were not, as our readers are aware, free from incidental illegality. For these and for the far greater wrongs which the Natus have suffered at the hands and under the unbridled tongue of Lord George Hamilton there ought to be some reparation.

In our issue of November 17 last (INDIA, vol. xii, p. 244) we printed a series of letters addressed to Lord Curzon by Mr. S. Kailasam Aiyar with reference to the detention of the Sirdars Natu. We are informed that the following letter has been addressed to Mr. Kailasam Aiyar by Sirdar B. R. Natu :—

Fort Belgaum, October 18, 1899.

My Dear Sir,—I received your kind letter dated 9th instant with the printed copy of the memorials addressed to his Excellency Lord Curzon. I am unable to express adequately my thankfulness for your kind deep sympathy for us in our *extreme difficulties*. I am particularly thankful to you on behalf of myself and my brother, in this matter because you have done a very great service in our case by sending these memorials without our acquaintance. When you will hear the decision from the Viceroy in this matter I hope that you will be kind enough to communicate to me the decision and oblige. Deep and sincere sympathy like yours all over India in our *extreme difficulties* is a great help and consolation to us. Hoping this will reach you in sound health.—I beg to remain, Sir, yours most obediently,

BALWANT RAMACHANDRA NATU.

Commenting a fortnight ago (INDIA, vol. xii, p. 286) upon Mr. Tilak's proceedings against the *Times of India* for reproducing a libellous paragraph from the London *Globe*, we enquired when the *Globe* was about to apologise. The paragraph in question, it will be remembered, spoke of "the arch-plotter Tilak" and "the campaign of murder which Tilak directed if he was not its organiser." The *Times of India* promptly published an unqualified apology for inserting "through inadvertence" these false and injurious statements, whereupon Mr. Tilak kindly abandoned the suit. We now hear that Mr. Tilak is instituting proceedings in London against the *Globe*, unless a full apology is made and a sum of money paid by the offender to the Transvaal War Fund and the Indian Famine Fund. It was high time that some Indian took action to curb the licence of irresponsible journalists in Fleet Street and the Strand whose ignorance of the facts explains though it does not excuse their reckless screeds. A smart lesson like this will not only be very salutary for the *Globe* but should also give a much needed warning to some of its yellow contemporaries.

There is no little cynicism in the repeated official admissions that British troops may at pleasure be withdrawn from India for service in South Africa. A large contingent was despatched some time ago, and bore the brunt of the fighting in the earlier weeks of the war. But more are needed and more, we are told, can easily be spared. The *Times* on Monday last published a telegram from its correspondent at Calcutta containing this passage :—

The demand (*sic*) made by the home authorities for one British cavalry regiment for the Cape is to be met by sending the 16th Lancers from Ambala. They are to embark at Bombay, taking their horses with them. It was expected that this requisition would have been made weeks ago, *as it was perfectly well known at home that additional cavalry could be spared from India*. . . . . The further requisition for 2,000 horses for the mounted infantry can also be easily complied with. . . . . A number of selected officers are being sent to take charge of them during the voyage.

That, at any rate, was tolerably frank. We do not complain. On the contrary, we have long maintained that the number of British troops stationed in India was far in excess of India's real requirements. The point is that it will not be easy hereafter for the home authorities to insist that the number employed before the war must be restored. Lord Curzon will have to desist from heroics about not reducing the army in India "by one single British soldier" during *his* Viceroyalty.

But the cynicism of the Calcutta correspondent of the *Times* seems to have given a fright to somebody at the India Office. For on the following day (Tuesday) this quasi-official statement was printed in the *Times* in large type and in a conspicuous position :—

The home authorities, while fully appreciating the generous support of the Government of India during the present crisis in South Africa, are of opinion that it is undesirable to make further demands on the European garrison of India unless unforeseen difficulties arise.

Here, instead of "demand" and "requisition," we have the pleasanter phrase "generous support." Note, however, that it is still admitted that should "unforeseen difficulties arise" in South Africa a further requisition upon the British army in India may yet be made. How can the number of British soldiers required in India be modified by difficulties in South Africa?

A further mysterious notification published in the *Times* of Wednesday indicates the nature of the communications which have passed between the War Office, the India Office, and Printing-house Square. It ran :—

Lord Roberts has induced the Home officials to waive their deci-

sion not to draw further on India, to the extent of allowing the 16th Lancers to go on service in South Africa. The regiment was very sore at not being included in the Indian contingent, and as India could spare a cavalry regiment it was decided to give the "Scarlet Lancers" a chance. Lord Roberts obtained the consent of the authorities at the last moment, after the Indian Government had been informed that no more calls would be made unless unforeseen circumstances arose.

There is obviously some confusion of dates. For we know from the telegram referred to above that the despatch of the 16th Lancers was decided upon some time ago. The home officials do not "waive their decision" in still taking them; they would "waive their decision" if they declined to take them. It is to be noted that everybody is agreed on India's ability to "spare a cavalry regiment," while the soreness of a regiment at being excluded, to say nothing of "unforeseen circumstances," is apparently sufficient reason for diminishing the British force in India. The farce, we should hope, will not be kept up much longer. But is it not monstrous that in ordinary times the indigent taxpayers of India should be compelled to maintain a farce, so palpably in excess of her requirements? For it goes without saying that, if ever a large British force is needed in India, it is precisely when the enemies of England think they see an opportunity because Englishmen have a war on their hands elsewhere.

Those who do not cycle are perhaps inclined to think no punishment too severe for a cyclist. It is not apparent whether the Cantonment Magistrate of Allahabad belongs to this category, but he certainly does not err on the side of leniency. For riding a bicycle in a crowded place with his hands off the handles—though there was no question of an accident having occurred—this magistrate sentenced an Indian cyclist to *one month's imprisonment*. It would be interesting to know if he is as strict with Anglo-Indian votaries of the wheel. We learn from *Power and Guardian* that this sentence has been reduced on appeal to a fine of Rs. 30.

There has been a disposition in some quarters to blame Mr. Pennell for the warmth of some passages in his famous Chupra judgment. There has even been an attempt in some quarters to draw away the attention of the public from the scandal itself in order to direct it to the terms in which the scandal was exposed. But the *Friend of India*, which is an Anglo-Indian paper, points out that a certain amount of heat was allowable in Mr. Pennell since the Chupra case was not the first with which he had had to deal wherein the high-handed action of European officials was brought to light; and this only on the fourteenth of the month preceeding his celebrated judgment. The *Friend of India* believes that Mr. Pennell's removal to Noakhali took place in the ordinary course and had been decided on before the case at Chupra was disposed of. It adds:—

Perhaps it is not too much to hope that other changes—outside the ordinary course—will show that the Government is not altogether indifferent to the scandalous state of things disclosed in the judgment.

We hope so too.

This other case which came to Mr. Pennell's notice is described by the *Friend of India*, and was as follows. An Indian Additional Sub-Judge going on board a ferry-boat, lost sight of his wife. In searching for her, he inadvertently went up a staircase reserved for first-class passengers while he held a second-class ticket. He was met at the top of the stairs by Mr. Blythe, who was not an official of the boat, but of the Government, being Additional Commissioner of Patna; but as the Sub-Judge did not turn back, Mr. Blythe summoned Mr. Butler, Executive Engineer at Suarum, who pushed the intruder down the steps. Mr. Macpherson, the District Magistrate, held that Butler was the injured party, and another official Mr. Casperoz brought great pressure to bear on the Sub-Judge to make him apologise, promising that Butler would apologise in his turn. The Sub-Judge apologised—for being assaulted—and then Butler refused to carry out his share of the bargain. Even then the officials were not satisfied; and Mr. Bourdillon, whom we heard of in the Chupra case, wrote to get the Sub-Judge transferred, suggesting it would be well to effect the transfer at the time of a general move, in order to avert suspicion as to the real reason. Mr. Pennell applied to the High Court to cancel this transfer.

A marked step in advance has been gained by the Government of India's acceptance of the recommendations of the Simla conference as to the outlines of Mr. Tata's proposed "Indian University of Research." The Conference has rather laid down the lines of development than made any substantial modification of the original scheme. The new institution will, we presume, have to be fitted somehow into the existing University system; for, though it is impressed with a post-graduate character, it would be waste to overlap the scientific departments of the existing Universities or to assume a position that would discourage them. The Conference recommends that the scientific, technical, and medical departments be first organised, leaving the literary and philosophical sides for subsequent consideration. There will be difficulties in connexion with Medicine, and some tact will be required in working out the scope of practical study. Is the "central institution" to be placed at Bombay or at Bangalore? The question seems an unexpected one; yet it is by no means so easy of solution as might appear. Mr. Tata himself inclines to Bangalore. Will Bombay rise to the occasion and show irrefragable grounds for establishing this institution of high promise in her midst?

The last issue of the *Times of India* that has come to hand shows that the Anglo-Indian public are at last waking up to the terrible nature of the Indian famine, and that all attempts to minimise it have been laid aside. This is how our contemporary opens its leading article on the subject:—

The time has come to recognise that in Western India, at all events, famine on a scale more serious than anything that had been foreseen is inevitable.

Many districts which it was hoped would escape appear now to be doomed. Even as to the districts of Northern India which are dependent on the Christmas rains, Lord Curzon seemed in his Agra speech to have some misgivings. As to the famine in Cutch, to which fodder had to be despatched in July to save the starving cattle, the *Times of India* declares it to be "as bad as bad could be."

Sir John Woodburn's verdict on the administration of Calcutta by the Municipal Commissioners is summarised by the *Pioneer* as "a fair record of achievement marred by habitual sins of omission." Their works of improvement according to Mr. Baker include the construction of the Harrison Road, the extension of the water-supply, the development of the underground drainage system, the construction of twenty-seven miles of minor roads, the reclamation of *bustees*, and the more effective disposal of town sewage; and all this has been done within ten years. Surely this is a programme, the carrying out of which should entitle the Municipality to be held in honour. It is true that Mr. Baker, who has to preside over the wrecking of an institution that has done such good work, adds some remarks of a less flattering nature:—

It has often been remarked that the Commissioners are at their best in dealing with large projects. Had they devoted to the every-day work of the town—to the collection of their revenues, to the conduct of their conservancy, and to the enforcement of their building regulations—the same energy and interest that they have brought to bear on more showy but not more important matters, their administration would have claimed a different verdict from the voice of public opinion.

Now this sounds excellent and jumps with the preconceived notions of many Englishmen as to the working of Indian Municipalities; but if the matter be analysed further, it will be found that these remarks of Mr. Baker are, as the *Bengalee* points out, in complete contradiction of all that was said in justification of the overthrow of the popularly elected Corporation of Calcutta. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was far from thinking that greater activity in details was required from the Commissioners. On the contrary, speaking on April 4, 1898 from his place in the Legislative Council, he said on the second reading of the Calcutta Municipal Bill:—

My theory of the Bill, the cardinal principle of the Bill, the essence of it is that we must leave the ordinary, every-day work of the city in one man's hand.

Thus Mr. Baker says that the Commissioners interfered too little in every-day work, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie that they interfered too much. But this is not all. When the object was the ruin of the old municipality, our feelings were harried by accounts of the neglect of great schemes of sanitation and water-supply to the injury of the health of the town and especially of the European

residents. Now it is said that it is precisely in such great schemes that the Commissioners were most successful. But then the work of wrecking is now accomplished.

If Anglo-Indian writers are to be believed the supporters of the Congress are men in such a critical state of mind that they spend their time in finding fault with the best of all possible governments and the most devoted of government officials. In reality, Indian publicists are very ready to make excuses for officials whom they believe to be sympathetic, although they may have become identified with unpopular measures. A case in point is that of Sir John Woodburn, who in spite of his connexion with the overthrow of popular government in Calcutta, has received no stinted praises from the Indian Press. The Bengalis have willingly overlooked the legacy which he inherited from his predecessor, in consideration of the many signs of good feeling which he has exhibited. *Power and Guardian* announces that the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal will welcome all rich and poor alike between 3 and 5 p.m. on December, 25 and 27 at Belvidere; and it hails this as a sign that Sir John is determined to win the good wishes of the people.

The hard case of Jotindra Nath Roy, son of Mr. Kedar Nath Roy, the respected Sessions judge of Bankura, has evoked much sympathy in India. After six years' study in England, Mr. Roy passed the open competitive examination in 1898, but was rejected at the medical examination, Dr. Ord being dissatisfied with the state of his lungs. Mr. Roy then demanded a medical board, and to this board, consisting of Dr. Ord, Dr. Clayton, and Sir Samuel Wilks, Mr. Roy's own physician, Sir Douglas Powell, submitted a detailed history of the case, upon which Sir Samuel Wilks admitted there was nothing seriously wrong. The Civil Service Commissioners, however, declined to reconsider Mr. Roy's case, on the ground that "it was their invariable practice to treat the decision arrived at in this way"—presumably on first examination—"as irrevocable." In that case, it does not appear why there should have been any further investigation into the matter before a medical board. Anyhow, Mr. Roy pluckily went in for the Civil Service Examination again this year, and again he was successful. As ill-luck would have it, he caught a chill the day before the medical examination, and again he was rejected. A direct appeal, we understand, has been addressed to the Secretary of State. One would suppose that if Mr. Roy is vigorous enough to keep on passing the Civil Service examinations successfully in this humid and changeable climate, he would, as Sir Douglas Powell judged, be well enough when he got back to India. We trust Lord George Hamilton will cast aside this stupid red tape, and give Mr. Roy a chance.

It is an Anglo-Indian commonplace that Indian students are too exclusively taken up with the gaining of degrees; but something more is expected from Lord Curzon. Addressing the students at the Victoria College in Gwalior, he told the young men:—

> . . . . the supreme aim of life is not to win a University degreee, but to qualify themselves for the profession in life which they aspire or are qualified to fill. . . . ,

But the *Tribune* points out that the professions chiefly affected by Indian students are law, medicine, and engineering; and for each of these a B.A. degree is requisite. So that if Indian students are to qualify themselves for their future professions, the winning of a B.A. degree, even though not the supreme object of life, must be an object. The educational system of India was not the creation of Indians but of their English rulers.

The *Champion* believes that a great injustice has been done to Mr. Velabhdas Sanderji Ved, who, in spite of high testimonials given to him in times past, has had his licence as an authorised translator taken away by Colonel Hunter, the Kathiawar Political Agent. The translator had been employed by a Vakil named Hawes to draw petitions for some clients; but the petitions were dismissed as relating to stale claims. Colonel Hunter held that the translator had instigated the parties to groundless, profitless, and expensive litigation, whereas, according to the *Champion*, he had only carried out their instructions. "It would, indeed," adds our contemporary, "come to a pretty farce if a litigant had to obtain the approval of his suit by every trumpery clerk employed in it. The next thing would be to require that the peons should, before carrying the papers, read them to decide whether they thought the claims stale."

Mr. F. A. Nicholson's scheme for establishing agricultural banks in the Madras Presidency contemplated that a quarter, or even a third, of the initial twenty lakhs of rupees per annum should be supplied by the State. But State banks pure and simple he regarded as impossible, and, even if possible, still inadvisable. The Madras Government, however, have rejected his suggestion of a guarantee, believing that a guarantee would mean just so much promotion of unthrift and improvidence. It may, on the other hand, be argued, with the Lahore *Tribune*, that the backward condition of India requires a lift in this matter, just as it has done in the matter of railways. "The Government is obliged," says our contemporary, "to undertake, for the benefit of its subjects, works which, in the advanced countries of Europe, would be left wholly and solely to private enterprise." The railway system, if it had been left to private enterprise, would be still to plan and execute; and "no new industry or enterprise can be successfully established in India without Government aid in some shape." It is a natural consequence of the all-absorbing spirit and extravagant conduct of the Government.

Another reason advanced by the Madras Government for their rejection of the proposal of a guarantee is this: that under the Loan Acts the rayats can borrow from Government, on the security of their land, for agricultural purposes at 5 per cent. But, as the *Tribune* points out, this statutory provision does not meet the requirements of the rayat. It limits very strictly the object to which the borrowed money is to be devoted, and the rayat has many other pressing or incidental objects. Again, the procedure for obtaining such loans involves "much harassment, delay and expense in the shape of bribery." Strange enough this may seem, yet Mr. Nicholson himself has stated that Government credit is guarded by "so many rules and formalities that it cannot reach those whom it would benefit." Further, the Government consider it impossible to advance so much money—it might aggregate possibly 200 lakhs—without an amazing accompaniment, to wit, such a rigidity of rules as would render the working of the banks in the manner contemplated a quite impracticable affair! This paralytic view is said to be derived from experience of other societies in which honest and capable managers have been replaced by unscrupulous and incapable successors; but it is forgotten that such societies were under no external supervision, State or other, such as rural banks are intended to be. It is a view that does not command such respect as one would wish always to pay to the considered judgments of a Council of State.

The Madras Government, further, looks askance at the average capacity and intelligence it discerns in the possible or probable village managers of the proposed institutions. Still they are in sympathy with Mr. Nicholson's main object, and they are inclined to concede or recommend seven privileges in the case of such approved banks as may place themselves under the general supervision of Government:—

(1) Relief from stamp duties on the Memorandum and Articles of Association;
(2) Relief from charges for registration under the Companies' Act;
(3) Reduction of stamp duties on documents within the bank;
(4) Reduction of registration fees on certain classes of documents;
(5) Correspondence with Government offices to be subject to the postal rules for official correspondence;
(6) The banks to be permitted to open public accounts with the savings banks; and
(7) To place their strong boxes in the nearest Government Treasury or Police Station for safe custody.

Very well; but one would have expected all that as matter of course. However, it is something that Mr. Nicholson has the Government's benevolent approval in the endeavour to start an experimental co-operative bank "in one or two villages" of a typical sort. We hope that Mr. Nicholson will make the attempt, and that his success will be such as to induce the Government to advance some little way beyond their present timid and distrustful position.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

IT is a common gibe of the less sympathetic Anglo-Indian writers that the Congress does not represent the mass of the Indians. It is said to be composed of men alienated from their countrymen by a foreign education, knowing nothing of and caring nothing for the sufferings of the peasantry, mere talkers with no experience of affairs, embittered by failure, and careless whether they light up a universal conflagration. If there are any who still believe this stale calumny, it might be well for them to read the address of Mr. Dutt at the opening of the present Congress. Mr. Dutt puts forward his views with all the caution and moderation of an experienced and successful civilian, and with the knowledge gained by twenty years of official life. That he has a command of the English tongue such as most Englishmen seek in vain is true. But he is far from having thereby lost his kinship with the people of India; and he has taken as the main subject of his Address, not the many real grievances of his educated countrymen, not even the evils which directly affect all classes, but the wrongs and sufferings of the agricultural population. It was a wise choice; for there is no one better able to deal with it; and there is no question which more profoundly touches the well-being of India. Passing by the tempting subject of the fields that have been lately fought—the Sedition Bill and the Calcutta Municipality—with some words of congratulation on the well-contested battles, and of hope for ultimate victory, Mr. Dutt set himself to review the actual position of the rayat and the incidence of the land-tax, the exorbitance of which he put forward as the real cause of Indian famines.

Mr. Dutt dealt first with the two causes of agricultural distress most often assigned by Anglo-Indians, and had no difficulty in showing that there was no basis for either. He quoted Mr. Baines, the late Census Commissioner of India, to prove that the population in that country does not grow so fast as in many others, and he gave his own testimony that the poverty of the rayat is not due to his own improvidence:—

> Those who have passed the best portion of their life among the Indian cultivators, as I have done, will tell you that the Indian cultivator is about the most frugal, the most provident, the most thoughtful about his future, among all races of cultivators on earth. If he goes to the money-lender it is not because he is in love with the money-lender, but because he has nothing to eat. If he pays 25 or 37 per cent. as interest on loans, it is because he cannot get loans on lower interest on such security as he can offer.

From these remarks, it might be suspected that Mr. Dutt has little confidence in the remedy which Lord Curzon proposes to apply to the Punjab. Such is the case. He brought before his hearers the results of his own experience in Orissa, where the cultivators are worse off than in any other part of Bengal, to show that the land was not passing out of their hands; and he recalled some former official discussions on this very matter in which his views had been strenuously supported by Mr. Stevens, the greatest revenue authority in Bengal and by Sir Antony MacDonnell, now Lieut.-Governor of the North-West Provinces. Mr. Dutt remarked on "the absurdity of relieving the cultivators by virtually taking away the market value of the one property they have on earth." On the contrary, he declared that "in order to improve their condition, we must make it possible for them—as it is possible in Bengal—to save in good years against failure of harvest in bad years."

To consider how this improvement could be effected, the President reviewed the condition of the cultivator in the various Provinces of India, pointing out at the commencement that as the village manufactures had been crushed out by competition with the steam and machinery of England, the whole population outside the towns had to depend on the land. Now, this comparison of the different Provinces yields some very remarkable results. Bengal is permanently settled, the tenants are protected by special legislation, and the average rent does not exceed one-sixth of the gross produce. The Province, which in the last century was devastated by one of the worst famines on record, has scarcely suffered at all from famine in recent times. Two mild visitations in 1874 and 1897 in Behar, unaccompanied by loss of life, have alone broken this immunity. Here, according to the President, is the true cause of the prosperity of Bengal; and nowhere else are the conditions of the agricultural population so favourable.

Mr. Dutt was careful to add that this question was really separate from that of the advantage or disadvantage of a permanent settlement. It was not the permanent settlement of Bengal, but an incidental result, the keeping down of rents which had made that Province so prosperous. This might be effected under other systems, without regard to the rival claims of the *rayatwari* and the *zemindari* tenures. The old Hindu law fixed one-sixth of the gross produce as the proper rent of land, and this is the average rent in Bengal. In other parts matters are very different. In the North-West Provinces the *money* rent is 20 per cent., or one-fifth of the gross produce; but this is equivalent to 33 per cent. in *kind*, or just twice that allowed by the old Hindu law, and paid in Bengal. But in the greater part of Madras things are even worse. The Government is the universal landlord and demands one-half of the produce after deducting the expenses of cultivation. Some light is thrown on what this means by the Madras Standing Information of 1879 in which it is laid down that the half of the net produce demanded for rent must not exceed 40 per cent. of the gross produce where the land is irrigated at Government cost, and 33 per cent. where the land is not so irrigated.

One other case was dealt with by the President in detail—that of the Central Provinces, where famines have been most severe and land-settlements most harsh. In the North-Western Provinces, the Government takes half the rent, which is there 20 per cent. of the gross produce, leaving half to the landlord. In some districts of the Central Provinces not only is the settlement made every twenty, instead of every thirty years, but until lately from 55 to 75 per cent. of the rent was taken by Government. By the last settlement from 50 to 60 per cent. was taken; and in both cases local rates to the extent of 10 or 12 per cent. must be added. And, of course, so severe a treatment of the landlords means a rigorous treatment of the peasants in their turn. Mr. Dutt concluded his remarks on rent with these words:—

> My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that these frequent and acute famines are mainly owing to the cause that *our village industries are gone, and our village lands are over-assessed.* My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that this enormous loss of lives is preventible, and can be prevented through more considerate settlements, assuring to the cultivator in every province an adequate proportion of the food that he produces.

Many other questions the President had no time to do more than mention; though in passing he noted one fact of serious import, that while the National Debt of the United Kingdom had been reduced since 1860 by 175 millions sterling, that of India had grown during the same period by over 100 millions. And this was a matter vitally affecting his proposed reduction of land assessment, for a decrease of taxation means a decrease of revenue, which must be met by a decrease of expenditure.

But the President hurried on to the last great subject of his address—"The desirability of bringing the administration into closer touch with the people." Beginning with the villages—because "in India the villager represents the nation"—Mr. Dutt complained that the District Officers worked entirely through the Police and never came in contact with the villagers and their natural leaders. He warmly welcomed the formation of Village Unions, and sketched the work that lay before them. Turning to the towns, he agreed that the Government ought to ensure efficient administration, but believed that this should be done directly as in Great Britain rather than by putting the elected commissioners on one side. Then as to the District Boards, though he saw that in general the Chairmen must be officials, for they alone would know the whole District, he was anxious there should be no hard and fast rule, for it might happen that an ex-official or even a private person might have the requisite knowledge. Going on step by step, he asked if it were impossible that each District should be represented in the Provincial Legislative Councils—the Government retaining its veto, and if necessary, the number of official members being increased. In the Provincial Legislative Councils the Indians are inadequately represented. In the Executive Councils they are not represented at all; and in some Provinces such Councils do not exist. Mr. Dutt put the case well when he said:—

> The weakness of the present system of Government is that in the decision on these administrative measures the people have no voice and are not heard at all.

He claimed that in all Executive Councils—even in that

of the Viceroy himself—Indians should have place and hearing.

Such in brief outline is this remarkable address. Many a salient thought and many a convincing argument has been necessarily passed over. But all who admire sound sense beautifully expressed will do well to read the whole speech for themselves. Mr. Dutt is one of those rare men who can keep an even mind amid conflicting motives. His official career has not made him draw away from his own people. His ardour for the popular cause has not made him forget the lessons of his official experience. While India has such leaders, who shall say that her hopes are vain?

"THE BRIDE'S MIRROR."[1]

THIS beautifully printed work represents a praiseworthy and interesting attempt to facilitate the study of Hindustani by English ladies. The editor deplores the neglect of that study, which he attributes not so much to indifference as to the difficulties placed in the way by the existence of two entirely distinct systems of writing a language which, when spoken, is essentially one. Without going so far as to advocate the adoption in India of the Roman character in place of both the Nāgari and the Persian script, he advocates the use of the Roman character by the English student. Such a student "could thus learn double the amount within the time at his disposal; and he would learn the language as a whole, without prejudice or misgiving as to its double form. It would be far easier for him to learn the scripts used in India after he has become familiar with the language than it is now, when the labour of decipherment proceeds *pari passu* with the labour of translation." Mr. Ward points out the inestimable value to the English youth of both sexes who set foot in India of a knowledge of modern Indian literature. The recent literature throws a light which the Oriental classics cannot throw on the thoughts and feelings of living Indians, and may even supply the missing key to the affections of the Indian people. The attitude of the Native to the Englishman, he justly says, is not unlike that which finds expression in the words:—

Main ne mana ki taghaful na karoge;—lekin
Khak ho ja-enge ham tum ko khabar hote tak.

"Not that you are inattentive, no, I grant that;—but still—
By the time you are *aware*, *we* shall be dust in our graves."

"The Bride's Mirror" was written by Maulavi Nazir-Ahmad for his daughters. He wrote the story because he could not find any book of the kind in the language—a work combining moral instruction with entertainment, which would help his girls to face the special difficulties of woman's life in India. "By degrees the book came to be talked of in the Mohulla. A few women came in to listen when it was being read, and all who listened were charmed with it. The manuscript was borrowed for perusal in some great houses. Applications were made for permission to take copies of it." Afterwards it was submitted to the Director of Public Instruction for the North-West Provinces, and was published. It has had many successors, but still retains its popularity. The story seems well suited to the purpose to which Mr. Ward has now applied it. His edition is equipped with notes and a full vocabulary, a translation of the author's preface and introduction, and an elaborate discussion of the consonantal and vowel sounds in Hindustani.

NOTES FROM BOMBAY.

[FROM AN INDIAN CORRESPONDENT.]

BOMBAY, December 8.

The Viceroy is still touring in the Upper Provinces, but he will soon return to the metropolis of the Empire. Last week he was in the historical city of Agra, where the lovely Taj—a thing of perennial joy and beauty—and other inimitable monuments still proclaim from every minaret and dome the past glory of the stately empire reared by the genius of Baber and crowned by the magnificence, humanity, and statesmanship of the Great Akbar. That this eternal city of Asia, like Rome in Europe, should excite the enthusiasm of a lover of art like Lord Curzon is not unnatural. Nor is it unnatural that that enthusiasm should inspire him with lofty eloquence.

Beyond these utterances on the historical antiquities of Agra and Delhi, he talked the sober language of the practical administrator. He was pleased with the municipal work done by the citizens, and encouraged them to do better. Such words of sympathy and encouragement are likely to have their influence on municipalities in general, and so long as presidencies and provinces have at their head administrators of the ripe and broad statesmanship of Sir Antony MacDonnell there need be no fear of civic government being strangled as it has been so ruthlessly in Calcutta. Unfortunately the MacDonnells and the Cottons are rare, while the Mackenzies and the Woodburns are common. Herein lies the future danger to local self-government in all parts of India. The bureaucracy seems to be alarmed at the progress made by municipalities everywhere, notwithstanding all obstacles. Our rulers forget that the instinct of local self-government is implanted in the Indian from times immemorial. That instinct, no doubt, was repressed by successive waves of foreign conquest. But the *pax Britannica* slowly brought it forth again, thanks to the sagacity of Lord Mayo and Lord Ripon. Curiously enough, instead of allowing this healthy spirit to grow, the reactionaries, in a fit of timidity which is most un-English, are doing the very opposite. That is not the British way of raising Indians in the scale of civilisation.

Let me turn to the all-absorbing topic of the hour. The famine grows from week to week. We are being confronted with the most serious question, how to provide drinking-water during the approaching summer for the starving millions in Gujerat, in Rajputana, and in parts of the Deccan. In two excellent articles, the *Times of India*, in its issues of the 7th and 8th instant, calls the attention of the public and the State to the matter with a view to taking some practical action betimes to avert the appalling mortality which is certain to ensue if drinking-water becomes scarce in the afflicted parts. Constructive statesmanship should bestir itself in time to devise means of avoiding this calamity. A correspondent under the *nom de guerre*, "Tita Pani" ("Drinking Water"), suggests that there should be early experiments with artesian wells. These, he urges, should be sunk wherever the geological formation of the affected localities tells us that there are water-bearing strata. Experts from America and Australia, where this system of drawing water from the bowels of the earth is well-known and extensively employed, are recommended to be put into requisition at once. As another correspondent, whose views are quoted by the *Times of India*, says, "time is of the essence" of the situation. Not a day should be lost. Food grains will be useless if men cannot get water. It is a new difficulty of a most formidable character with which we are all confronted.

Apart from artesian wells, Norton's tube wells are suggested. During the Abyssinian Campaign of 1867-68, the troops on the march were supplied on the way, in places where no water on the surface was to be found, by means of these tube wells. They served their purpose admirably. This proposal also needs to be well considered, as it is the opinion of some who are conversant with it that it is both economical and feasible. It is to be hoped that something practical may soon be attempted.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

FIFTEENTH SESSION.

MEETING AT LUCKNOW.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

The Fifteenth Session of the Indian National Congress opened at Lucknow on Wednesday last, December 27. The President, Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, C.I.E., delivered his address. He said:—

When in October last I received through my friend, Mr. Bonnerjee, your kind invitation to preside at this meeting of the Indian National Congress, I confess, I received it with some degree of surprise and some degree of hesitation and misgiving. I happened to be then engaged in the pleasant task, to which I have cheerfully devoted most of my spare time during the last fifteen years, of trying to interpret to my countrymen and to modern readers generally some of the literary heritage which has been left to us by our forefathers;

[1] "The Bride's Mirror; or, Mir-atu l-arus, of Maulavi Nazir-Ahmad." Edited in the Roman Character by G. E. Ward, M.A. London: Henry Froude.

and I confess, the prospect of a sudden change from the desk to the platform somewhat alarmed me. Nor was the alarm altogether groundless; for when I read the magnificent speeches made from this platform in past years by some of the ablest and most eloquent men that our country has produced during this generation, I felt grave doubts whether you were altogether wise in your choice in asking me to preside in the present year. However, I felt the great honour you did me in imposing the task upon me; I feel the high honour which you have done me as I stand to-day among so many who are so well qualified to perform this task; and for better or for worse, I have accepted your kind proposal and am amidst you to-day. And if you will listen with some indulgence to the plain words of a plain man, I will try to convey to you in a few words some remarks, and some practical suggestions, on the administrative questions of the day.

I need hardly tell you that these questions have received my attention and my consideration for years past; I have spoken and written on them during the last two years; and during the preceding twenty-six years I had constantly to deal with many of them in official correspondence. It is perhaps known to all of you that the Government of India and the Local Governments permit and encourage the utmost freedom to all officials in the expression of their opinions in official correspondence on the administrative questions which constantly come up for discussion. It is in the course of such discussions that the men in the Civil Service come to know and to respect each other's opinions, and are often brought in closer contact with each other. And as we are holding this present meeting of our Congress in the North-West of India, I recall to-day with pride that it was in course of a discussion of this nature over the Bengal Tenancy Bill which was passed into law in 1885, that I had the pleasure and the privilege of first knowing that sympathetic ruler and that distinguished statesmen whom you now claim as Lieutenant-Governor of these provinces, but whom we in Bengal are proud to claim as originally of the Bengal Civil Service.

Gentlemen, I often felt it my duty in the course of these official discussions to suggest reforms on the basis of accepting in a larger degree the co-operation of the people of India in the administration of the country. And, although I have ceased to be an official now, I still consider it my duty to do what lies in my humble power to advise and help the Government of the day in the great task of a good and successful administration based on the co-operation of the people. And it is because this is precisely the object of the Indian National Congress—it is because it is your aim and endeavour to sustain and help British administration based on popular co-operation —that I find myself amongst you to-day, and in complete unison with you in views and aspirations.

The Creed of the Congress.

Gentlemen, I have perused a great portion of the Congress literature as published in a handy volume by the enterprising publisher Mr. Natesan; and to those who desire honestly to know the aims and aspirations of the educated men of India, I can honestly recommend a perusal of this valuable publication. An honest critic will find in this volume—from the first page to the last—a sincere desire to support and sustain the Government by the co-operation of the people, to strengthen the hands of the Government by fair criticism, to help the Government by keeping it informed of the views and aspirations of the people. These are services which would be useful and valuable to administrators in any country in the world, and these are services which are doubly valuable in India where the people are not represented in any of the executive councils and secretariats where executive and legislative measures are first put into shape. For remember, gentlemen, that there are generally two sides to every question which comes up for discussion, and it is desirable and necessary that both sides should be properly represented and heard before the question is decided. It is no disrespect to the Civil Service of India to say that it represents, ably and fairly, the official side only of Indian questions. I have had the honour of passing the best years of my life in the Indian Civil Service, and I shall be the last person on earth to question either the ability or the honesty of purpose of those able and hard working men who form that magnificent service. I have pleasant recollections of the years which I have passed in complete accord and friendliness with my colleagues in that service, of the fair and handsome treatment which I received from my seniors, and of the loyal and zealous co-operation which I received from my juniors; and I will say this, that take the Indian Civil Service with all its faults and all its shortcomings—for hard work and honesty of purpose there is not a finer body of administrators in the world. Nevertheless, it must be admitted, and it is no disrespect to the Indian Civil Service to say it, that that service represents only the official view of Indian questions, and does not and cannot represent the people's views. There are two sides to every question, and it is absolutely necessary for the purposes of good government and of just administration that not only the official view, but the people's view on every question should be represented and heard. There are local bodies in different parts of India which give expression to the people's views on local questions; but this National Congress is the only body in India which seeks to represent the views and aspirations of the people of India as a whole in all large and important, and if I may use the word, Imperial questions of administration. Therefore, this National Congress is doing a service to the Government the value of which cannot be overestimated, and which I feel certain is appreciated by the Government itself. It is a gain to the administration to know what we feel, and what we think, and what we desire—though our demands cannot always be conceded. It is a help to responsible administrators to know in what direction our wishes and our aspirations tend, though they may not always agree with us. I honestly believe therefore that you are helping the cause of good administration and of good government in India by your deliberations year after year, and I trust and hope that you will continue to carry on these deliberations in the future, as you have done in the past, with good sense and moderation, with loyalty to our rulers, and with fidelity to the real interests of the people. We cannot fail in this endeavour; the future is with us; and looking at the progress of nations all over the British Empire in every part of the world, I, for one, feel confident that we, too, are destined to move onwards as a portion of that great Empire, and that we, too, shall secure some measure of progress and self-government under the Imperial rule of England. This is the creed of the Congress as it is mine, and it is therefore, gentlemen, that I feel it an honour to find myself amidst you to-day. And consistently with this principle, my speech to-day will be, not one of criticism, but mainly and essentially one of practical suggestions to which the Government will, I humbly hope, give such consideration as they may seem to deserve.

Famine of 1897.

Gentlemen, it is a little over two years ago you celebrated in India, with every demonstration of loyalty and good feeling, the sixtieth year of the reign of the Queen-Empress. I happened to be in England on that day, and I witnessed with joy and gratification the august procession in London—her Majesty driving in state through a circuit of six miles, preceded and followed by representatives of every portion of the British Empire, and cheered by half a million of loyal Englishmen who lined the circuit. Every contingent from every land was cheered as it accompanied the Queen, and I can tell you that none was cheered more loudly and more heartily than the Indian contingent—the Indian princes and rájás, distinguished by their graceful dress and noble demeanour, their manly bearing and their soldierlike appearance. It was a great and imposing and gratifying sight, but it was clouded by one dark shadow. The British public felt, British newspapers wrote, and British statesmen spoke, that while every self-governing colony represented in that procession was prosperous and happy, India alone, with its vast population, was even then suffering from a famine which had spread over a larger extent of country than had ever been visited by famine in any single year. Questions were asked why there should be such famines in India when famines were unheard of in any other well-governed country in the world, and doubts were expressed if British rule in India had been altogether a blessing for the poor cultivators and labourers of India.

But, gentlemen, the famine of 1897 was not the only calamity of that year; it was accompanied by a war outside our frontiers which cost us some millions and many brave lives, and it was accompanied by a plague the ravages of which are not yet over. In the midst of those calamities the Government thought it necessary to adopt rigorous measures, and the Government thought it wise to restrict that liberty of the Press which we in India had enjoyed for over sixty years. It is not my intention to-day to dwell on the sad occurrences of 1897, the saddest year in its accumulation of calamities since the time that India passed from the hands of the East India Company to the Crown. Nor is it my intention to revive to-day the discussions which were held in this country and in England when the unfortunate Sedition Bills were passed into law.

Sedition Law of 1898.

I recall with sadness the debates which took place in the Viceroy's Council and in the House of Commons when these Bills were passed into law. It was my privilege to hear those debates in the House of Commons, and I think I only echo the general feeling of all educated men in this country when I acknowledge our deep debt of gratitude to those who so ably but so unsuccessfully fought for us both in the Viceroy's Council and in the House of Commons. I do not desire to renew these discussions, but now that the fight is over, and the Bills have been passed into law, I often ask myself if there is a single Englishman in this country with an intimate knowledge of the country and its people who honestly thinks that the reactionary measure was needed, or that it is answering any useful purpose, or that it has strengthened the Government and increased its reputation and credit in the eyes of Europe. Gentlemen, the measure was based on a blunder—the blunder of connecting sedition with the spread of education. The truth is precisely the reverse of this. English education had not only not produced sedition in the land, but it has been the strongest weapon by which the Government has stamped out real sedition in this country within the last fifty years. In the dark days of 1857 and earlier, there was real sedition in the land—a real wish in some dark and obscure corners to overturn this great Empire. That desire was born of ignorance and lurked amidst ignorant classes, and the Government has successfully stamped out that feeling by the spread of education. There never was a greater Imperialist among the Governors-General of India than Lord Dalhousie, and Lord Dalhousie strengthened and fortified the Empire by giving effect to the famous educational dispatch of 1854, and spreading education through vernacular schools. There never was a stronger upholder of British dominion in its darkest days than Lord Canning, and Lord Canning established the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The same policy has been pursued by successive Viceroys during the last forty years with the same object and the same effect, and wherever education has spread, sedition in India is dead. And if real sedition still lingers in any corner of India, it is in the darkness of ignorance, not in the sunlight of education and free discussion. If I were disposed to foment sedition in India I would desire in the first place to suppress all free discussion, suppress all newspapers, and suppress all public meetings, as a

burglar puts out the lights of a room before he commits burglary. And I make bold to add, gentlemen, that if you had been inspired by hostile feelings against British rule in India, you would have worked in the dark, and not come forward from all parts of India, year after year, to openly and loyally place your views before the ruling power. Educated India has practically identified itself with British rule, seeks to perpetuate British rule, is loyal to the British rule, as Lord Dufferin said, not through sentiment, but through the stronger motive of self-interest; because it is by a continuance of the British rule that educated India seeks to secure that larger measure of self-government, that position among the modern nations of the earth, which it is our aim and endeavour to secure. Gentlemen, if you had a single representative in the Viceroy's Executive Council if you had one Indian member to take a part in those deliberations in the Executive Council which resulted in the Sedition Law, you could have explained these matters then and there. But it is a penalty which all Governments constituted like the Executive Councils of India have to pay, that they have to decide questions after hearing one side only, and not the other. Only one view is properly represented before them, and not the other: and the ablest, the most just, and the most conscientious of judges will make mistakes, if they base their decisions on evidence produced by one party, and not the other.

Only one word more before I leave this subject. I regret as much and as sincerely as any man in India the bitterness of tone which sometimes pervades journalism in this country. Five years ago, as officiating Commissioner of Burdwan, I had occasion to write on this subject, and if I allude to my report now, it is because the report was printed and published in the Calcutta Gazette, and is therefore not an official secret. I said on that occasion, and on many succeeding occasions, that differences in opinion must always exist between the English newspapers and Indian newspapers in this country. English newspapers hold that an absolute government is the best and only possible government in India, and that any system of representation or self-government is a mistake. The Indian papers hold on the other hand that there can be no good government in a large and civilised country like India, and no satisfactory solution of those great evils like famines and the impoverishment of the humbler classes, without some co-operation of the people themselves in the control of the administration. It is possible, I said, to hold and maintain these opposite views without studied contempt and sneer on the one side, and bitterness of tone on the other side. And those journals which introduce this element of contempt and hatred in the discussion of administrative questions are creating difficulties for the British Government, and sowing seeds of evil in India. It is by some degree of sympathy, some degree of good feeling and neighbourly courtesy, and not by Sedition Laws that the relations between the different sections of the Indian community can be improved. As one who has passed the best years of his life in administrative work, I have noticed that every improvement in the tone of the English press is warmly responded to by the Indian press, and that every want of kindliness and good feeling adds to the difficulties of administration and weakens British rule in India.

Calcutta Municipality.

But I pass over this subject, because it is not my object to-day to make my speech a criticism of the Sedition Law, or of other measures already passed. I wish also to pass over with very few remarks the controversies relating to recent municipal laws, and to the Calcutta Municipality. These controversies are fresh in your minds, and the subject will, no doubt, receive ample justice from other speakers before we have closed our proceedings. To me, one consoling feature in the history of this unfortunate measure is the help rendered to our cause by so high an authority as the Right Honourable Sir Henry Fowler. It was my privilege to be a listener in the House of Commons on the memorable night when the late Secretary of State spoke from the Liberal front bench, supporting Mr. Herbert Roberts, and condemning the virtual withdrawal of that boon of self-government which it is the proud boast of England to have conferred on the metropolis of India. Gentlemen, even Sir Henry Fowler has spoken in vain—at least, for the present—but we are none the less grateful to him for his strong advocacy of a just and righteous cause, the cause of self-government in India. Nor are we less grateful to those who have fought the same battle in this country, foremost among whom stands Rájá Binay Krishna Deb, a worthy scion of a worthy house which has been loyal and friendly to British rule in India since the days of Clive and Hastings. To our friends who fought in the Legislative Council, and to others who were true to the cause of our progress is due our warmest acknowledgment and our deepest gratitude. Gentlemen, their example, their endeavours and their sustained effort will live in the memory of our countrymen, and will find a place in the history of our country. A constitutional battle so fought is not fought in vain, and our children and our children's children, to whom we shall hand down the heritage of a loyal and constitutional agitation for self-government under the imperial and progressive rule of England, will look upon the closing of the nineteenth century as an epoch in the history of the land, and will draw new inspiration from the example of the men of this century who have lived and worked and fought—not in vain. There are defeats which are more glorious than victories; and the defeat which we have sustained will strengthen our hearts, freshen our hopes, and nerve our hands for new endeavours.

With regard to the actual result of this battle, I do not know if there is any class of men in Calcutta who in their hearts like it much. I have asked myself if there is any Englishman familiar with the history of the Calcutta Municipality who thinks that the new measure will improve administration, promote sanitation, or secure the willing co-operation of all classes of citizens. I do not know if the officials of Calcutta who have done so much in the past to foster municipal self-government will contemplate with gratification the ruin of the noble edifice which they built up with the labour of a [illegible]ter of a century. I do not know if the European merchants of C[illegible] who are busy, practical men, and have lived in amity and g[illegible]ling with the Indian population, will like the idea to spread over the country that wherever English trade prospers not only Indian manufactures, but Indian political and municipal rights, too, must be sacrificed. I do not know if the new City Fathers of Calcutta contemplate with joy their prospects of performing, without the co-operation of the people, their difficult and thankless task, with a poor, inadequate, almost beggarly income. What the elected Commissioners have done in the way of sanitary reforms with this poor income is a matter of history. Gentlemen, I remember Calcutta some forty years ago under the administration of Government officials, when we as schoolboys had to walk to school by open drains and reeking filth. I remember Calcutta as it was under the Justices of the Peace, some thirty years ago, with its awkward tale of waste and jobbery. And I have seen year after year the improvements effected, the sanitary reforms done, the wasteful expenditure cut down, and every department of the office brought to order, by the elected Commissioners within the last twenty-five years—by some of the best men whom our country has produced, and who have given years of their life to this patriotic work. Their work has been consistently recognised in past years by successive rulers of the land; but it is necessary to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it; and it was reserved for Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who was a friend of self-government under the administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Ripon, to end his career in India by giving the self-government system in Calcutta a bad name, and then effectually strangling it. Gentlemen, I feel sad whenever I think over these matters, and I feel sad when I recollect that this thing has come to pass in the first year of Lord Curzon's administration. I honestly believe that no Viceroy ever came out to India with a more sincere desire to work for the good of the people, and with the help and co-operation of the people. I honestly think that his Lordship in Council gave a most careful consideration to the question before he issued his own proposals; and if that Council had contained a single Indian member to represent the Indian view of the question, and to explain the true history of the municipality during the last forty years, I am persuaded Lord Curzon would have taken the same view as Sir Henry Fowler had taken, and would have effected the needed reforms in the Calcutta Municipality and strengthened the the executive, without virtually sacrificing self-government. But our difficulty and our danger lie in this, that great administrative questions are discussed and settled in Executive Councils where we are not represented and not heard. I do not say that the official view is necessarily wrong, and that our view is necessarily right; but I do say that both views should be fairly represented before the tribunal which shapes our destinies. I do not say that we have more knowledge or more experience or more ability than the high officials who represent the official view of the question, but I do say that we view questions from a different point of view, and that there should be a constitutional channel for the representation of our views in the Executive Councils of the empire. For when the Executive Councils have decided a question, the thing is done—the Legislative Councils simply carry out the official mandate with unimportant alterations, as the Bengal Council has done in the case of the Municipal Bill.

Famine of 1899.

But, Gentlemen, I must extricate myself from this subject and pass on at once to the great calamity which now stares us in the face, the famine from which millions of our countrymen are suffering even now; and with your permission I will devote all my remaining time to this one great subject—which appears to me to be one of paramount importance—the famines of India, and the condition of our poorer classes. Gentlemen, you are aware of the prompt measures which have been already adopted by the Government of Lord Curzon for the relief of distress in British territory and for helping Indian Princes to relieve distress in Native States during this time of trouble and anxiety. And those of you who have had experience of relief operations in previous famines will feel confident that Englishmen when they have once put their hand to the plough, will not leave the work half done. It is with a pardonable pride that I recall past days when I myself was employed along with my English colleagues in famine relief operations, or in providing against impending famines, in 1874, in 1876, and in 1896, and judging from my past experience, and judging from the measures adopted this year, I feel confident that no effort, no expenditure, no means humanly possible, will be spared by a benevolent Government to save life and to relieve distress among the millions of our suffering countrymen. And in the face of this calamity it behoves us all, it behoves this National Congress, to do all we can to strengthen the hands of the Government, to offer our help according to our capacity and power, and to place our suggestions before the Government, not in a spirit of criticism but in a spirit of loyalty and co-operation, for the relief of the present distress and for the prevention of such distress in future.

Alleged Causes of Famines.

It is in this spirit that I suggest that the time has come when it is desirable to take some effective measures to improve the condition of the agricultural population of India. Their poverty, their distress, their indebtedness, all this is not their fault. Sometimes it is asserted that the poverty of the people and the famines which we witness in India, and in no other well-governed country on earth, are due to the over-increase in population. Gentlemen, this is not so. If you go into figures you will find that the population does not increase in India as fast as it does in many European countries like Germany and England. And if you read the paper written by Mr. Baines, the late Census Commissioner of India, in the first volume of the British Empire Series recently issued in London, you will find the Census Commissioner has distinctly stated that the growth of population in India is not so fast as that in Germany or in England. Sometimes, again it is asserted, that the poverty of the Indian agriculturist is due to his own improvidence, wastefulness, and folly. Gentlemen, this is not so. Those who have passed the best portion of their life among the Indian cultivators, as I have done, will tell you that the Indian cultivator is about the most frugal,

the most provident, the most thoughtful about his future, among all races of cultivators on earth. If he goes to the money-lender it is not because he is in love with the money-lender, but because he has nothing to eat. If he pays 25 or 37 per cent. as interest on loans, it is because he cannot get loans on lower interest on such security as he can offer.

We are all aware that the Government of India are at the present time endeavouring to safeguard the interests of the cultivators in the Punjab and elsewhere from the claims of money-lenders on their land. I do not wish to speak on the merits of the Bill, because I never wish to say a word or to express an opinion on inadequate information, and the information I have been able to gather about the condition of the Punjab tenants is not yet as full and complete as I could wish it to be. All that I can say is that this idea, that the condition of cultivators can be improved not by helping them to save, but by restricting their right of sale and mortgage, is an old idea which has been found utterly unsound in Bengal. The policy was advocated when the Bengal Tenancy Bill was under discussion fifteen years ago; I myself took my humble part in strongly resisting the policy; and if I remember correctly, the able Revenue Secretary of Bengal, who is now the Lieutenant-Governor of these Provinces, took the same view. I allude to these views because they are no secret, and will be found published in the *Calcutta Gazette* of that year. The absurdity of relieving the cultivators by virtually taking away from the market value of the one property they have on earth was strongly exposed, and the idea of placing any restrictions on mortgage and sale of lands was ultimately abandoned.

Curiously enough, the question was mooted again in Bengal only three years ago, showing what vast importance is attached to official views and ideas formed in close council chambers. The fear was entertained that land was slipping away from the hands of the cultivating classes to the hands of the money-lending classes, and that to restrict the right of sale and mortgage was the only remedy. I happened to be then acting as Commissioner of Orissa, a part of Bengal which is not permanently settled, and where the condition of the cultivators is worse than in other parts of Bengal. If the free right of sale or mortgage has worked evil in any part of Bengal, it must have done so in Orissa. But I was able to show from the records of half-a-century that, although the right of sale and of mortgage had been freely exercised, land had not slipped out of the hands of the cultivating classes, and that to take away from the market value of the land was not the best way to help the cultivators. Fortunately the greatest revenue authority of Bengal, Mr. Stevens, who afterwards acted as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, took the same view, and the idea of helping the cultivators by decreasing the market value of their land was once more abandoned. I do not wish, gentlemen, to generalise on these facts; I do not wish to infer that what would be needless and mischievous in Bengal and Orissa may not be needful and useful for the time being in some parts of India where matters may have reached a more acute stage. But what I do wish to emphasize is that such remedies cannot permanently improve the condition of the cultivators; that in order to improve their condition, we must make it possible for them—as it is possible in Bengal—to save in good years against failure of harvest in bad years.

Real Cause of Famines, and the Remedy.

Gentlemen, the real cause of the poverty of our agricultural population is simple and even obvious, if we have the courage and the honesty to seek for it and to grasp it. It is not over-population, for the population does not increase faster than in European countries, does not increase faster than the area of cultivation. It is not the natural improvidence of the cultivator, for those who know the Indian cultivator will tell you that with all his ignorance and superstition, he is as provident, as frugal, as shrewd in matters of his own interest as the cultivator in any part of the globe. The real cause of his wretchedness and indebtedness is that, except in Bengal and a few other tracts, the land assessment is so heavy that the cultivator is not able to save in good years enough to meet the failure of harvests in bad years. All our village industries, like spinning and weaving, have been killed by a free competition with the steam and machinery of England. Our cultivators and even our village industrial classes therefore virtually depend on the soil as the one remaining source of their subsistence. The land assessments should therefore be made in a liberal and even a generous spirit. There is every desire in the high officials to make the assessments in a liberal spirit, but as the people have no voice in controlling these assessments, they are found in the actual working to be often illiberal and harsh. They do not leave the cultivators enough to be able to save; and cultivators therefore fall victims to famine whenever the harvests fail.

Bengal.

The old Hindu law, based on the actual experience of thousands of years, sanctioned one-sixth the gross produce of the land as its proper rent. The experience of modern times confirms the wisdom of this ancient rule. In Bengal, where the Permanent Settlement and the land laws of 1859, 1868 and 1885 save the cultivators from undue enhancements, the average rent paid by cultivators to landlords does not exceed one-sixth the gross produce in any district, and falls far short of it in eastern districts. The result is that Permanently Settled Bengal, which suffered from the most terrible famine in the last century, has been generally free from destructive famines in recent times. The famines of Behar in 1874 and 1897 were comparatively mild, and there was no loss of life. Extend the Bengal rule to other parts of India; make one-sixth the gross produce the maximum rent leviable from cultivators in other provinces, and the problem of preventing deaths from famines in India is solved.

North-Western Provinces.

In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh the cultivators are, generally speaking, not safeguarded by a Permanent Settlement. Each new assessment means an increase in Government revenue. Let us find out in what position the actual cultivator is left by such settlements. The system of settlements in the North-western Provinces has often been described, but I have never seen a more lucid account of it, within a brief compass, than in the evidence of Sir Antony MacDonnell before the Currency Committee which lately sat in London. Read his Honour's answer to questions No. 5,737 to 5,740, and you have a clear account of the North-west settlements in a nutshell. There are two salient facts which I will place before you from this account. In the first place, the Government allows the landlords to make their own arrangements with the cultivators, and then demands one-half of what the landlord actually gets, after making certain reductions. In the second place, under these arrangements the landlords are actually getting about 20 per cent. of the gross produce in money, and the Government share is one-half of of that. Gentlemen, these arrangements are better than those in many other parts of India, and you may be sure the rules are worked considerately, and even leniently, by a ruler who yields to none in India in his real sympathy for the actual cultivator. But nevertheless I should have been relieved to learn that the 20 per cent. of the gross produce represented the maximum limit of rent, and not the average rent. Without such a maximum limit the cultivator has no assurance against over-assessment and undue enhancement. And a landlord who has submitted to an increase of the Government demand at a settlement has the temptation to reimburse himself by raising his rents—as a squeezed sponge fills itself when thrown into the water—to be squeezed again at the next settlement, thirty years later. Adopt the ancient Hindu rule, which is virtually still the rule in Bengal; make one-sixth the actual produce—or even one-fifth the actual produce—the limit of rent under all circumstances, and you make the cultivators of these provinces as prosperous as they are in Bengal, and the problem of disastrous and fatal famines is virtually solved.

Madras.

The state of things is far worse in Madras. Some portions of the Madras Presidency are permanently settled, but in the greater portion of the Province the revenue is not permanently settled, there is no class of landlords, and the Government demands as revenue one-half of the net produce of the land, *i.e.*, of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. For a clear, and luminous, and brief account of how this system has worked I would refer you to the speeches made in recent years by the Rájá of Bobbili and by Mr. Vencataratnam, himself a large landholder, and President of the Godaveri District Association. They point out that the rights of the Madras cultivators have not been strengthened, as in Bengal, by successive Acts within this half-century, but have been weakened by successive measures of the Government. They point out that in 1857, the proprietary right of the cultivator with fixity of assessment was admitted by the Government; that in 1882 under Lord Ripon's administration a virtual pledge was given that no enhancements would be allowed except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices; and that at the present day these pledges are ignored, these safeguards are withdrawn, and enhancements are actually made on the ground of re-classification of soils as well as of rise in prices. More than this, I read a passage in the Madras Standing Information of 1879, quoted in the *Hindu* newspaper of Madras, that the land tax estimated at one half the net produce should not exceed 40 per cent. of gross produce where the land is irrigated at Government cost, and should not exceed 33 per cent. of the gross produce in the case of lands not so irrigated. When I read a rule like this, I am filled with bewilderment and pain. Where is the old Hindu rule fixing one-sixth of the produce as the proper rent—a rule which is virtually observed in Bengal at the present day with such happy results? Let me mention, gentlemen, that when the Tenancy Bill of Bengal was under discussion in 1884, I had the honour to recommend that 20 per cent. of the gross produce—which is a little over the old Hindu rate—should be fixed as the maximum of rent payable by a cultivator. My proposal was approved and accepted by the Government of Bengal, but it was not ultimately passed into law, because, in many parts of Bengal, the zemindars were getting much less than 20 per cent. of the produce, and to frame a rule about maximum rent might induce landlords in all parts of Bengal to screw up the rental to that maximum. The argument was good, and I was not sorry that my proposal was rejected. But it is somewhat curious that while the Bengal Government declined to fix 20 per cent. of the produce as the maximum of rent, for fear that the zemindars might work up to that rate, the Madras Government had actually a rule in their Standing Information Book fixing 33 and 40 per cent. of the gross produce as the maximum rent. Are you surprised that under the circumstances there should be such repeated and disastrous famines in Madras, and that as pointed out by Mr. A. Rogers—late of the Indian Civil Service and a high authority in revenue matters—a great deal of land is out of cultivation because cultivators cannot pay the rent that is demanded by the State-landlord? The rule in Madras is, as I have said before, to demand one-half the net produce—*i.e.*, the value of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. Gentlemen, I state it from my experience that such calculations cannot be accurately made, and that every mistake made is fatal to the cultivators. And I also state it from my experience that one-half of the net produce—not of the assets of the zemindars as in the North-West Provinces, but of the net produce of the land—is a ruinous rate of land-tax which is bound to bring the cultivating classes into wretchedness and poverty and to disastrous famines in every year of the failure of crops. Adopt the old Indian rule—the rule which is practically observed in Bengal with such happy results—and you relieve the cultivating population of Madras, and virtually solve the problem of famines.

Bombay and the Punjab.

Gentlemen, I have not time to-day to go over the land revenue arrangements in other parts of India—of the Bombay Presidency or of the Punjab. In Bombay we have generally the same system as in Madras, the Government generally receiving rents direct from the cultivators. But the settlement officers in Bombay take into consideration what have been paid by cultivators [illegible] previous years without difficulty, and do not proceed merely o[illegible]r calculations; and in so far the Bombay method is better than [illegible]Iadras method.

In the Punjab the land system is somewhat similar to that of the North-Western Provinces; but you will find on examination that neither in Bombay nor in the Punjab is the cultivator assured of getting an adequate proportion of the produce of the land he cultivates; and without such assurance his condition cannot be improved, and he cannot be saved from famines merely by tinkering with his relations with his money-lender. I am not discussing to-day the merits of the different systems prevailing in the different Provinces of India—the *Zemindari* system of Bengal, the *Talukdari* system of Oudh, the *Mahalwari* system of the North-West, the *Malguzari* system of Central India, or the *Rayatwari* system of Southern India. Nor am I discussing the desirability of extending the Permanent Settlement to all parts of India as was recommended by Lord Canning in 1860, though I myself think that would be a wise and a generous measure to which the Government is pledged by its many promises in the past. I am not entering into these subjects in order to avoid all discussion, all controversy; and I am laying down a proposal which must receive universal assent without any controversy—viz., that the cultivator should be assured in an adequate share of the produce of his land if he is to be saved from indebtedness and poverty, distress and famine. I have confined myself to the actual condition of the cultivator, and the incidence of the land tax on the cultivator, for in India the cultivator is the nation. Never mind under what system or under what settlement he lives, assure to him an adequate proportion out of the produce of his land—such a proportion as the old Hindu law assured him, and the custom in modern Bengal assures him—and he is saved, and the nation is saved.

Central Provinces.

But before I leave this subject I must say one word about the Central Provinces of India, which have suffered so disastrously in the famine of 1897, and which is suffering once more under the famine of 1899. The Central Provinces have suffered more from recent famines than any other part of India because the land revenue settlements have been more severe and more harsh, not in their intention, but in their actual operation, than any other part of India. I constantly heard in England, as I have no doubt you constantly heard in this country, of the disastrous results of the recent revenue settlements in that Province, initiated by Sir Alexander Mackenzie and completed by his successors. But I will not mention here what I have heard, I will limit my remarks entirely to the facts contained in official reports and stated in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India in reply to questions put to him in March last year, by one of the truest friends of the Indian cultivator, Mr. Samuel Smith.

Gentlemen, there is a healthy rule, generally followed in the North-Western Provinces, that settlements are made for thirty years, because it is undesirable to harass the people with frequent enhancements and frequent settlement operations. The rulers of the Central Provinces have departed from this rule and made the present settlement for twenty years, save in a few backward tracts, where I suppose still shorter settlements have been made. There is another healthy rule, followed in the North-Western Provinces, that the land revenue is fixed at one-half the rental received by landlords. Will you believe it that in the eastern and southern districts of the Central Provinces the Government revenue was fixed between 55 and 75 per cent. of the rent in the previous settlement, and between 50 and 60 per cent. in the recent settlement? Add to this another 12 per cent. for certain local rates, and the Government demand on the Malguzars comes to about 72 per cent. of their supposed collections. I ask every impartial man, every fair minded administrator, why settlements have been made in the Central Provinces for twenty years or less when settlements are made in the North-West for thirty years? I ask every responsible ruler why the Government should demand 60 per cent. as rent, *plus* 12 per cent. as rates, from the Malguzar of the Central Provinces when the Government receives only about 40 per cent. in the North-West according to the evidence of Sir Antony MacDonnell? These differences in figures may not mean much to the theoretical statesman, but they mean life and death to the Indian cultivator. Every tampering with the settled rules in land settlements, every lowering of the period of settlements, every increase in the proportion of the Government demand means the further impoverishment of the cultivators, means increased wretchedness and indebtedness in ordinary times, increased deaths in famines. Why, gentlemen, this very experiment was tried in these North-Western Provinces; the Government demand at first was not half but two-thirds of the assets of the landlords; and that rule created a degree of suffering to the people greater than all the wars of the first half of this century. That rule was ultimately abandoned in 1855, and the Government demand was fixed at one-half the rental of the landlords; and is it fair that we should go back in the Central Provinces to the old rule which our experience has taught us here to be harsh and cruel to the cultivators? If the people had any control over the executive action in the Central Provinces, the tampering with the old established settlement rules would not have been allowed. If the people had been represented in the Viceroy's Executive Council to press these matters, no Viceroy of India would have permitted such departure from the usual settlement rules, a departure which has been disastrous in its consequences on the condition of the people, and increased the deaths from famines in the Central Provinces.

Gentlemen, I have detained you longer on this subject than I had intended, but the importance of the subject is my excuse. I state my deliberate opinion, based on a careful study of the question for thirty years, that the land revenue arrangements in India are responsible, not for bringing on famines, but for deepening the effects of these famines; and secondly, that if the position of the cultivator was assured—as it is assured by the Hindu laws, and as it is assured in Bengal—loss of lives could be prevented on the occurrence of famines, as it has been prevented in Bengal. British administration has done much for us; it has given us internal peace, it has given us education, it has brought us nearer to western civilisation. But British administration has not performed all its duty so long as the country is desolated by famines, unheard of in any other civilised and well-governed country. My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that these frequent and acute famines are mainly owing to the cause that *our village industries are gone, and our village lands are over-assessed*. My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that this enormous loss of life is preventible, and could be avoided by more considerate land settlements, assuring to the cultivator in every province an adequate proportion of the food that he produces.

Military Expenditure, National Debt, Currency, Industries, Services.

Gentlemen, there are various other reasons of the poverty of India under the British Rule, which I have not touched upon to-day, and which I do not wish to touch upon, because they have been discussed ably, eloquently, and repeatedly by yourselves at previous meetings of this Congress, and some of them will be discussed again this year by other speakers. There is the question of the enormous Military Expenditure, and the maintenance of a vast army out of the resources of India, not for the requirements of India, but for the requirements of the British Empire in Asia, Africa, and even in Europe. There is the question of the National Debt, which, in Great Britain, has been reduced by about 175 millions since 1860, and which has gone up by over 100 millions in India within this period, causing an increasing drain out of the revenues of India for the payment of the interest in England. There is the question of the Currency which has been lately settled by the Currency Committee in a manner not conducive to the interests of the millions of cultivators whose debts have been increased, and savings depreciated. There is the question of encouraging and helping the Industrial Classes ruined by unfair competition—a question which has been ably and exhaustively dealt with by one of the most thoughtful writers of our generation, Mr. Justice Ranade of Bombay. And there is the question of the possible saving in expenditure by a larger employment of the educated people of India, not only in the Indian Civil Service, but in the higher grades of all services, Educational and Medical, Police and Engineering, Post Office and Telegraph. Three generations of Indians have been educated in English schools and colleges in India; they have proved their fitness and capacity in every place they have held; and yet they are virtually Uitlanders in their own country, so far as a real control over administration is concerned.

I pass over these and other cognate subjects because I have no time to deal with them, and because you have often dealt with them eloquently and exhaustively, and will deal with many of them again. I only repeat that it is perfectly possible to cut down expenditure, to moderate land assessments, to revive industries, and to prevent deaths from famines in India, if there is a real determination to rule India for the good of the people, and with the co-operation of the people. On this last subject only I wish, with your indulgence, to add another word or two—the subject of bringing the administration in closer touch with the people, and bringing our rulers in closer touch with ourselves. This is desired by every enlightened and far-sighted ruler as well as by ourselves; and this is calculated to improve the administration and to make British rule in India stronger and more popular. A commencement has been made in this direction since the days of Munro and Elphinstone and Lord William Bentinck; and what I will suggest is not a new departure, but a progress in the lines already laid down. I do not myself believe in new departures and novel experiments in administration; having passed the best years of my life in administration I naturally have more faith in gradual and cautious progress in the lines which have been already laid down.

Village Unions.

Gentlemen, I will begin with villages—because, as I have already said, in India the villager represents the nation. In village administration there is no touch between the rulers and the people, the only link between the administrators and the people in civil administration is the hated link of the police. It is a misfortune and an administrative mistake that our District officers should have so little direct touch with the villagers and their natural leaders, and should work so entirely through the police. If there is distress in the land, the police makes enquiries; if there is cholera epidemic in the land the police distributes cholera pills; if a village tank has given way or the village water supply dried up the police report and organise help; if a tree has been blown down and obstructs a village path, (I have seen instances of this myself), the villagers are powerless to help themselves until the police comes and removes the obstruction. It seems to be a mockery that the very country which was the first to organise village communities, village Panchyets, and village self-government, and cherished these institutions for 3,000 years, should be rendered so absolutely helpless, and should be ruled through the undesirable agency of the police. Gentlemen, the mistake has been discovered and Village Unions have been formed or are in the course of formation in most Provinces in India. Make these Village Unions real centres of village administration in so far as is consistent with good government. Parcel out each Sub-division into twenty or thirty Village Unions, entrust the Union Committees with the charge of village roads, village tanks, village drainage, village education, and village hospitals, and send over to them all petty civil and criminal cases, not for judicial disposal, but for amicable settlement. A great deal of expensive litigation and bad feeling in villages can thus be stopped, a great deal of useful work can thus be done, and what is more, the natural leaders of the village population will thus come in touch with the Sub-divisional and District administrators, and will form the agents of village administration in so far as they are fit to take that position. An unsympathetic system of rule through the police will thus be replaced by a rule with the co-operation of the people themselves.

Municipal Towns.

From the subject of Villages I come to the subject of Municipal Towns which are receiving a great deal of attention now. Gentlemen,

I consider it of primary importance that we should insist on efficient municipal administration, and that power should be given to the Government to ensure such efficient administration if the Municipal Commissioners are slack. Such power is retained by the Government in England, and it is more necessary that such power should be retained by the Government in India. But having provided for this, I am of opinion that the work should be done through the elected Commissioners and not through officials or secretaries appointed by the Government. The latter system ruins self-government, and is not needed. I have myself supervised the work of every municipality in a District as a District-Officer, and I have supervised the work of all the municipalities in a Division as a Divisional Commissioner. The municipal Commissioners were sometimes zealous and sometimes slack, sometimes they went the right way and sometimes the wrong way; but I have never found them obstructive; I have never found them averse to sanitary improvement or general progress; I have never found them other than amenable to reason and advice. With some tact and patience and sympathy we can get all that we want to do through the men elected by the people themselves; and it is unwise and undesirable, it is a confession of our own incompetency and want of sympathy, to try to replace the elective system by men appointed by the Government to do municipal work in the small district towns of India. The aptitude for self-government in towns and villages is, in India, a heritage of three thousand years, and to seek to ignore it is an administrative blunder, and a confession of our own incompetence.

District Boards.

Coming next to the subject of District Boards, the question is often asked why non-official chairmen should not be appointed over these Boards. The reason, gentlemen, in the generality of cases, is that non-official gentlemen who know their own villages and estates well, have not the same knowledge of the district as a whole as the District Officer. We must, above all, insist on efficient work being done—and generally the District Officer is the only man who can in the ordinary course of his tours supervise and secure efficient work throughout his district. At the same time I would not make any hard and fast rule; and where we have retired Government servants or private gentlemen who know their districts well, and who have the capacity and the time for administrative work, it would be a gain and not a loss to our administration to see such gentlemen appointed chairmen of District Boards; and I sincerely hope to see a beginning made by the Government in this direction. Another question which is often discussed in connexion with District Boards is the poverty of their income. This, gentlemen, is a real and a grave evil; and it has become not only desirable but necessary that for large provincial schemes of irrigation and drainage the resources of the District Board should be supplemented by provincial grants. You are aware how much good is done in these Provinces by a system of irrigation wells; and there is no reason why the work of the maintenance of a sufficient number of such wells and other works for the prevention of famines should not be made over to the District Board on allotments made by the Provincial Government. In Bengal the crying evil is bad drainage, which causes that malaria which is the curse of one-half of the province. There is no reason why a provincial grant should not be made to every District Board for the proper drainage of the district. Gentlemen, I have said it elsewhere that the money spent on one needless trans-frontier war if spent in improving the drainage of Bengal would save millions of the people permanently from one of the direst curses of the present age. My advice is: Make the District Boards real agents of popular and beneficent administration with the co-operation of the people; do not make them inane and lifeless bodies, partly by the shackles of red-tape and partly by a process of starvation in respect of funds.

Provincial Legislative Councils.

And now, gentlemen, I come to the important subject of Provincial Legislative Councils, and on this subject also my suggestion will be to proceed on the lines already laid down, and not to take a new departure. The object of allowing district and municipal bodies to elect members of these Councils was to allow the views of the people to be represented, and I think every responsible administrator in India will admit that this wise step has improved and strengthened the legislative machinery of the Government. Even when the views of the elected members are rejected—and they are often rejected—even then the expression of their views is a gain to the cause of administration. The time has now come when a fuller scope may be given to this expression of our views and the representation of our opinions. Half-a-dozen members, elected under somewhat complicated rules, can scarcely give expression to the views of the people of a province with a population of thirty or forty millions or more. Is it too much to hope that in the not remote future the Government will find it possible to permit every district to be represented by its own member? I do not object to the number of official and nominated members being also increased; I do not object to the Councils sitting five days or six days in the week instead of one day; and I do not object to the head of the Government reserving the power of vetoing a measure, even against the views of the majority of the council, in urgent cases, as the Queen of England has theoretically the power to refuse her consent to a measure passed by both Houses. With these safeguards, I would suggest an expansion of the provincial councils on the bases of each district being represented by its member, so that there may be an adequate expression of the people's opinions and views on every question. We do not wish for the absolute control of the administration of the country, but we do demand an adequate means of placing our views before the Government before it decides on questions affecting our welfare.

Provincial Executive Councils.

But gentlemen, the Legislative Councils deal with legislation only, there are large and important measures of administration which do not come within the scope of these Councils. The weakness of the present system of government is that in the decision on these administrative measures the people have no voice and are not heard at all. To take one instance out of hundreds which will no doubt suggest themselves to you, the people of the Central Provinces of India had no constitutional means of declaring whether the revenue settlement should be for twenty or thirty years; whether the Government demand should be 50 per cent. of the Malguzars' assets, or 60 per cent. plus 12 per cent. as rates; and the decision to which the Government arrived without the constitutional advice of the people has been disastrous. Gentlemen, this defect can be rectified, this weakness may be removed. There are Executive Councils in Bombay and in Madras; similar Executive Councils may be formed in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, in the Central Provinces and in Bengal, and at least one member of the Executive Council should be an Indian gentleman with experience in administrative work, and representing the views of his countrymen. It is usual for a member of an Executive Council to have a portfolio, *i.e.*, to have one department of work assigned to him; and the work which I would assign to the Indian member is Land Revenue, Agriculture and Industries. There is no department of work in which an Indian member can make himself more useful, or make his services more valuable to the voiceless millions of cultivators and artisans. The addition of one Indian member will not weaken Provincial administration; it will strengthen such adminstration, make it more sympathetic, and bring it into somewhat closer touch with the people.

The Viceroy's Executive Council.

And, gentlemen, am I aspiring too high when I hope for similar seats for Indian members in the cloudy heights of Imperial Simla? Am I urging anything unreasonable when I propose that the Viceroy, who has the benefit of consulting experienced English administrators in his Executive Council, should also have the advantage of hearing the views and opinions of a few Indian members in the same Council before he decides on questions affecting the interests of the people of India? Am I urging anything unwise when I propose that the Viceroy, when he considers measures affecting the condition of the indebted cultivators, the operations of plague and famine relief, the rules of land revenue settlements, the questions affecting Hindu and Mahometan customs and manners, should have by him, in his own Executive Council, a few Indian gentlemen who represent the views, the opinions and the feelings of the people? An Executive Council cannot be much enlarged without loss of efficiency; but surely the Viceroy's Council could make room for three Indian gentlemen, one to represent Bengal and Assam, another to represent the North-west and the Punjab, and the third to represent Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces. The selection should rest, of course, with the Viceroy himself, for anything like election into an Executive Council would be absurd; and the three Indian members should be entrusted with the departments of Agriculture, Industries and Land Revenue of their respective provinces. The wise and magnanimous Akbar entrusted his Land Revenue arrangements to a Todar Mall; and the British Government may consider it wise and statesmanlike to avail itself of the experience of Indian gentlemen in controlling Land Revenue settlements, and generally in improving the condition of the voiceless and impoverished cultivators and labourers of India. I myself think that the administration of the country would be vastly improved by such representation of Indian opinions in our highest Councils, and that the Government of India and the Government of the Provinces would be brought in closer touch with the people. And, gentlemen, I am very much mistaken in our present Viceroy if his Excellency does not himself sincerely desire to mark his administration by some measures which will bring the rulers in closer touch with the people.

Progress in the Future.

And now, gentlemen, it only remains for me to thank you once more for the great honour you have done me by electing me to preside on this occasion, and for the kind and patient hearing you have given me. I have been somewhat of an optimist all my life, I have a belief in progress, I have faith in the British Government, I have lived and worked in that faith and I should like to die in that faith. The experiment of administration *for the people*, not *by the people*, was tried in every country in Europe in the last century, by some of the best-intentioned sovereigns that ever lived, who are known in history as the Benevolent Despots of the 18th Century. The experiment failed because it is an immutable law of nature that you cannot permanently secure the welfare of a people if you tie up the hands of the people themselves. Every country in Europe recognises this truth now, and England foremost of all. Every English colony has obtained a system of self-government, and from being discontented and disaffected they are now the strongest supporters of the British empire. And a system of complete self-government in local affairs was conceded to Ireland by the present Government less than two years ago, when Lord Curzon was a distinguished member of that Government. The conditions of India are different, and I admit freely and fully that we want a strong centralised Government here; and if the moderate scheme I have proposed tended in any way to weaken the Indian Government, the proposal, gentlemen, would not have come from me. But I have discussed the subject with many eminent Englishmen now in England, possessing vast experience in Indian administration, and I have asked them to reject my scheme if they thought it would weaken the Indian Government instead of greatly strengthening it. Gentlemen, I have never been told in reply that the scheme would weaken the Government. It is isolation, it is exclusiveness, it is want of touch with the people, which weakens British rule in India, and my desire is to strengthen that rule by bringing it in touch with the people, by enlisting the zealous co-operation of a great and loyal nation.

Permit me, gentlemen, to refer for a moment to my own experience as a District Officer. You are aware that a District Officer is liable to frequent transfers; and I was sometimes in charge of districts where 75 per cent. of the people were Hindus, and at other times of districts where 75 per cent. were Mahometans. I may remark in passing that everywhere I received the cordial co-operation of the people in my administrative work, and the sympathy and support which I received from Mahometan zemindars and the Mahometan population

enabled me to administer with some degree of success such vast and difficult districts at Backergunj and Mymensing. But what I wish specially to mention is that in these Mahometan districts the Government always employed a number of able Mahometan Deputy Collectors to advise and help the District Officer in his work; and in all questions relating to the social and economic conditions of the Mahometan people, and to their public feelings and religious sentiments I received the most valuable help and advice from my Mahometan colleagues in the work of administration. Gentlemen, the duties and responsibilities of a District Officer are humble compared to the manifold duties and high responsibilities of a Viceroy or the Governor of a Province; and I therefore often ask myself if those statesmen do not sometimes feel, as we humble District Officers always felt, that it would help and improve administration to have a few true representatives of the people by their side and in their Executive Councils. And I cannot help replying to myself that the advice and help of some Indian colleagues would greatly strengthen the hands of wise and sympathetic statesmen in solving the great problems which lie before them, none of which is more momentous and more pressing than the condition of the Indian agriculturist and the Indian artisan.

Gentlemen, from whatever point of view I examine the question, whether in the light of European history, or of the spirit of British institutions, or of the requirements for good government for India, I feel convinced that to associate the people of India more largely in shaping the administration of the country is not only the wisest but the only possible path before us. It is true we have not been moving onwards in this path in recent years; we have actually stepped backwards in these years of disasters and calamities and panic; we have even been deprived of those rights which we secured in years of wise and sympathetic administration. But such years of retrograde movement come to all nations from time to time, even to those who are most advanced. Remember England at the close of the last century, when to talk of political reform was punished as sedition and crime, when coercive measures were passed to stop public meetings, when reactionary laws were enacted to restrict the liberties of Englishmen. The panic passed away after the Napoleonic wars were over, and the Reform came in 1832. The reactionary period through which we are passing will end before long, and wise English statesmen will perceive in the future, as they have perceived in the past that England's duty and England's interests are the same in India.

Gentlemen, it is possible to avert famines and national impoverishment, to spread prosperity and contentment, and to strengthen and consolidate this great empire, by accepting the co-operation of the people themselves in directing the administration, and by conceding to them in some measure the rights of Representation and Self-Government. Good government is impossible in India as it is in Europe unless it is government with the help and the co-operation of the people themselves.

THE RELEASE OF THE NATUS.

A Central News telegram dated Bombay, Tuesday, said: "The Natu brothers, who were arrested on charges of sedition at the time of the Poona outrages, and imprisoned at the pleasure of the Government, were to-day released amid the general rejoicings of the Brahmin community."

A Reuter's telegram from Bombay said it was understood that the Natu brothers, who were imprisoned on charges of sedition, would be unconditionally released forthwith by the Bombay Government. A later telegram said the Natu brothers had been informed that they were no longer State prisoners, and that the attachment on their lands and estates had been cancelled.

COMMENTS OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote (December 27):—The Indian Government by a tardy act of clemency released the brothers Natu yesterday. They have been in prison or under police surveillance in their own houses since July, 1897, for a crime that has never been proved against them in court. They were suddenly arrested and imprisoned under an obsolete and very un-English Act of 1827, which gave the Indian Government power to seize and detain persons without bringing them to trial on a specified charge. The Indian Government, through Lord George Hamilton, has affirmed that they were the promoters of the Poona riots, that they encouraged the people to resist the useful work of the sanitary authorities, and that they were in some way implicated in the conspiracy which led to the murder of Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst. "The authorities were absolutely unanimous," Lord George Hamilton stated in Parliament in February, 1898, "that, in the interests of the public safety, these two men should be deported." The Indian authorities may have been right or they may have been wrong. The point is that they disregarded the traditions of English justice and fairplay by giving the accused men no chance of proving their innocence before the courts—a default all the more impolitic because the Indian Government makes it its own business to teach the youth of India at State colleges the binding nature of those traditions. To gain what was at [illegible] a trifling advantage they copied one of the worst features of d[illegible] and imprisoned these men by what the Russians would call [illegible]istrative order," or the French of the old monarchy a *lettr*[illegible]. We should hope, both for the credit of this country and for the sake of our Indian Empire, that it is the last time such a thing will occur.

The *Morning Leader* (December 27) said:—On Christmas Day Sirdar B. R. Natu and his brother were released by the Bombay Government, or, to be quite accurate, by Lord George Hamilton. A fresh stage is therefore reached in an outrage to which, we are happy to think, there are few parallels in the history of the British Empire. Everybody knows, or ought to know, the main facts in this eventful story. A telegram which announces the release of Lord George Hamilton's suspects says that they "were arrested on charges of sedition at the time of the Poona outrages." It would not be easy to compress more inaccuracy into the same number of words. For the Sirdars Natu were not arrested until some weeks after the Poona outrages (of Jubilee Day, 1897), and the leading feature in the incident was that no charge whatsoever was made against them. They were suddenly deported, and their property was attached, under a virtually obsolete Regulation of the year 1827, authorising arrest under administrative order, without specific accusation, and without any immediate intention of bringing the prisoners to trial. Since that time, nearly two and a-half years ago, these unfortunate men have been State prisoners, not brought to trial, not confronted with their accusers, and not even informed of their crimes, if any, which are, or were, laid to their charge. Now that they have at length been released, on the eve of Lord Sandhurst's departure from Bombay, it will be interesting to see what reparation is offered to them for the wrong they have endured, or, failing that, what action they take to bring their oppressors to book.

Lord George Hamilton has been manifestly uneasy about the men upon whom his hasty and ignorant anger fell in the autumn of 1897. Although he has never accused them in a court of law, he has not hesitated to defame them on various occasions in the House of Commons. First of all, a few days after their deportation he accused them pretty plainly in Parliament of complicity in the murder of Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst. That accusation was promptly blown to the winds by the discovery and execution of the real murderers, at whose trial the judge declared that there was no evidence of a widespread conspiracy. Instead of releasing the Natus Lord George Hamilton uttered a revised and amended slander against them. They were no longer accomplices in murder, but one of them was said to have interfered with a policeman and intimidated a midwife. These allegations, even if they had been true, would have been a sufficiently odd pretext for the summary deportation and the prolonged imprisonment of two prominent and respected citizens. But the allegations were quickly shown to be false. Finally, Lord George Hamilton, learning by experience the dangers of too precise defamation, took refuge in a vague formula. The Natus, he said, imperilled the public tranquility and must remain in detention at the discretion of the Government of Bombay. A more melancholy scandal it would be difficult to conceive. Lord George Hamilton was capable of it because he is capable of anything. But it is to be hoped that somebody will yet smart for so flat a violation of the principles of justice. The release of the Natus synchronises interestingly enough with the meeting of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow. The Congress has done good service in keeping attention fixed upon the wrong done to the Natus, and if it is not able to secure the repeal of the obnoxious Regulation it ought at least to make pretty certain that so terrible an instrument will never again be employed for a reason so inadequate.

The *St. James's Gazette* wrote:—The announcement is now made that the Natu brothers have been released, and that the attachment on their land and estates has been cancelled by the Bombay Government. Thus ends one of the most singular incidents in the history of our rule in India. It will be remembered that shortly after the murder of Mr. Rand at Poona during the Jubilee festivities of 1897, the Natu brothers were arrested, as being the leaders of the Mahratta Brahmins, on grounds of disaffection. The arrest was summarily effected under an old and almost obsolete Act, and the brothers have been imprisoned without a trial for the last eighteen months and their lands attached. Now that all danger has died away they are quietly released. The decisive action of the Bombay Government was criticised with some freedom at the time by those feather-bed publicists who think that a country in which we are practically an armed garrison can be held by merely constitutional means. But the one sentiment among loyal and educated Natives was of astonishment that the Sirkar had not taken such a simple and decided step long before. Similarly now we think that the release might reasonably have been delayed till our prestige in India was assured by the complete defeat of the Boers.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* said:—The release of the brothers Natu winds up the Indian sedition troubles of 1897. They were influential persons who used their influence in a dangerous manner, and it was sound policy to lay them by the heels and muzzle them. But the Indian air has cleared, and the release of the brothers and the removal of the attachment upon their estates is a sign that the Bombay Presidency and all India are relieved from anxiety. The Natus, it is to be hoped, have learned their lesson. The fact that the Bombay Government have seen their way to this act of clemency may be noted by those kind friends of the British Empire who try to imagine that it is going to the dogs, and that India, in particular, is ripe for passing from us immediately after South Africa.

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